

George French Farm (Tract #12657)
east side Route AA, 3.-5 miles south of Route 35
Clinton Vicinity
Henry County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1229

HABS,
MO,
42-CLINT.V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MO-1229

GEORGE FRENCH FARM (Tract #12657)

Location: East side of Route AA where it turns south after jogging east, 3.75 miles south of route 35, approximately 5 miles southeast of Clinton, Clinton Vicinity, Henry County, Missouri.

USGS Gaines Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates 15.438230.4240270

Present Owner: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District.

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Probably the oldest frame house extant in the survey area, the George French house as it originally stood was a two-room house of heavy-timber construction with a large sandstone chimney. The stone vault root cellar is an outstanding example of its type.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: circa 1855-1860.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: NW 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4 Section 29 Township 41 N Range 25W. Both John James and George French entered land November 13, 1854. James sold the one acre upon which the house stands to French, July 30, 1858 (S:294). The land remained in the family until sold to the Corps: George French to George Groff, his grandson, August 30, 1902 (150:487); George Groff to Clay Groff in 1957 (362:477).
4. Original plan and construction: The house, of heavy timber construction, was originally a two room, one story cabin with a large sandstone chimney in the kitchen.
5. Alterations and additions: Three additional rooms and a porch were added "after the Civil War" (D. Groff). The siding and window treatment, which are uniform throughout, indicate a circa 1880 date for the addition. The chimney was taken down in 1908 since it had become impractical for heating and was no longer needed for cooking. There is a window in its place. The basement was probably dug at a later date. The stone vault root cellar was built circa 1870.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

George French was born in Russell County, Kentucky, June 25, 1825, and came to Missouri circa 1854, when both he and John James entered the land. French chose his homesite because of an easily recognizable landmark, a lone oak tree standing out in a field, and because of plentiful water -- a spring stood on the land and a creek flowed past it. The site was not his property, however, and he later bought the acre for \$10. He could neither read nor write, though his wife, Ruth, was a schoolteacher.

During the Civil war there was a skirmish at Sparrow Creek and the wounded, three or four in number, were laid out in French's kitchen. One bled so badly that the stains never came out of the floorboards.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished:

- a. Plat book A and Deed books S:294, 150:487, 362:477 in the Registry of Deeds, Henry County Courthouse, Clinton.

United States Census for 1860, 1870, and 1880

b. Interviews:

Daisy Groff, 32 East Ohio, Clinton, August 2, 1977.
Granddaughter of the builder.

Mr. Clay Groff, Clinton, August 2, 1977. Great-grandson
of the builder.

Mrs. Lee (Juanita Groff) Miller, Clinton, August 1,
1977. Great-granddaughter of the builder.

2. Secondary:

Clinton Eye. December 31, 1904: Ruth French obituary. July
18, 1908: George French obituary.

Prepared by Paul Garfield Weed
Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
Summer 1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The George French House is one of the oldest one story L-plan houses in the survey. The front two rooms of this house have a heavy-timber pegged frame while the rear wing is balloon framed. An excellent stone vaulted root cellar is adjacent to the house.
2. Condition of fabric: The house has been vacant for many years and is in poor condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The one-story L-shaped house has a three-bay front, 26'5" across, by 40'5" deep.
2. Foundations: The sandstone foundation, about 24" high, is directly on grade. There is a concrete basement and stairs under the northeast corner of the house.
3. Wall construction: White horizontal wood siding over heavy timber and balloon frame.
4. Structural system: The pegged heavy timber frame in the front two rooms has heavy posts in the corners with knee braces pegged into them. Hand hewn beams run from front to back, and the rafters meet with no ridge member. The rear wing is balloon framed.
5. Porches: There is a small concrete porch with four steps at the front door. A wooden screened porch fills the rear ell. Concrete walls line the stairs on the east side leading down to the basement.
6. Chimneys: There are two brick stove chimneys, one on the ridge in the center of the front timber framed section, and one on the ridge in the center of the rear wing. The house originally had a stone fireplace and chimney at the center of the east wall.

7. Openings: The door and window openings have peaked lintels (low triangular pediments) and square moldings. The doors have four vertical rectangular panels, two larger above two smaller ones. Windows are four-over-four pane double hung wood sash.
8. Roof: The gable roof, which pitches to cover the porch in the rear, has green asphalt shingles over wood shingles.

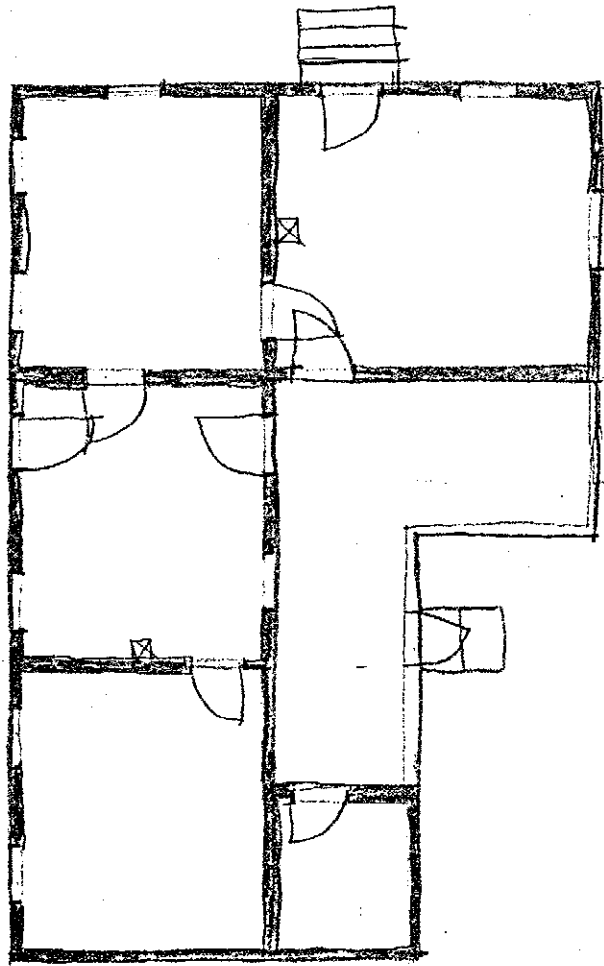
C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: In the L-shaped plan, the front two rooms face north. Off the rear of the west side extends the ell, which has two rooms. A screened porch is located in the L, and there is a small room at the south end of this porch.
2. Stairways: Exterior concrete stairs on the east side lead to the basement.
3. Flooring: There is 3 1/4" wide wood flooring in the original two rooms and 5" wide flooring in the newer rear rooms.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wallpaper over plaster on wood lath.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces north. A spring lies about thirty yards east of the house. The house is now surrounded by trees although it formerly sat in a grass yard with a garden. State highway AA makes a sharp banked turn to the south just west of the house, but the embankment hides the house from view.
2. Outbuildings: There is a stone vaulted root cellar, partially dug into the ground. The stone mound, about 20' in diameter, has a vaulted interior, approximately 12' x 14'. The entrance is in the center of the narrow east end. The sod on top of the stone vaulting is about 6" high. A metal pipe column was added at the center of the vault for additional support.

Prepared by William Brookover
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings
Survey
Summer 1977



PLAN GEORGE FRENCH HOUSE
#12657



PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Truman Reservoir Project was funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer, Kansas City District, in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of the Harry S. Truman Dam and Reservoir, in the summer of 1977. William Brookover (Columbia University), supervisor; Michael Connor (University of Virginia), team foreman; Gary Baker (Catholic University), Edwin Daniel (Mississippi State), and Gary Statkus (University of Illinois), student architects; Paul Weed (Columbia University), architectural historian.